

**MINUTES OF EMERGENCY OPEN SESSION
OF THE
DARTMOUTH SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

DECEMBER 15, 2020

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Chris Oliver at 6:00 p.m. and was held remotely via Zoom Technology. The Chair stated the meeting is streaming live on the DHS Media YouTube channel and noted the meeting was being videotaped for future broadcast over DCTV. The Chair advised viewers that comments can be emailed to the recording secretary at kathleengenthner@dartmouthschools.org to be read during Public Comment.

Present were the following members: Mr. Oliver, Dr. Jenkins, Mrs. Amaral, Mrs. Waite and Mr. Nunes.

Also present: Dr. Gifford, Mr. Kiely, and Mrs. Genthner.

Mr. Oliver stated that the sole item on tonight's agenda is an update on COVID-19 and that public comments will not be taken this evening.

Mr. Oliver introduced Chris Michaud, Director of Public Health for the Town of Dartmouth, and invited Mr. Michaud to speak on the Town's COVID-19 status.

Mr. Michaud provided information regarding the increase in Dartmouth COVID cases as well as increases in surrounding areas noting the Town's numbers are higher now than they were last spring.

Mr. Michaud cautioned that the coming holiday season will likely bring more positive cases to the Town and stressed the need to remain vigilant in following health requirements and recommendations.

Mr. Michaud expressed his concern that the general public is not realizing the full impact of the virus and so may become lax in personal efforts to remain cautious and vigilant in their decisions and actions particularly as we head in to the holiday season.

Mr. Michaud stated the schools are doing a very good job keeping the schools free from COVID clarifying that the cases being reported by the School Department originates from COVID being brought into the schools; we are not seeing "clusters" within the schools.

Mr. Michaud lauded the efforts of all involved - including Town Nurses as well as Dartmouth Public School nurses and School Department administrators - in stemming the spread of COVID particularly through contact tracing which he stated will likely be necessary throughout the holiday break.

Mr. Michaud added that with the start of the winter sports program at the schools there is a potential for some increase in cases.

Mr. Oliver asked Mr. Michaud if he thought the Town of Dartmouth would be providing testing as it is offered in surrounding communities.

Mr. Michaud stated testing is very costly noting the slower speed in which test results are now trending the information they render is becoming “stale” consequently making the testing not particularly helpful with contact tracing.

Dr. Jenkins asked if there is any potential for a partnership with the Town and UMASS/Dartmouth who has been conducting testing on campus.

Mr. Michaud responded that he has no information about a partnership.

The Committee thanked Mr. Michaud for sharing his expertise and for clarifying the Town’s COVID status.

Mr. Oliver invited Mr. Michaud to remain in attendance should he so wish and continued the meeting to discuss whether or not the School District should return to a remote model prior to the holiday break.

Mr. Nunes commented that we should keep the students in school.

Dr. Jenkins stated she was not inclined to support going remote prior to the holiday break but that we should be prepare to go remote after the break should the numbers increase.

Mrs. Waite commented staff and parents should be told what model will be implemented with enough time to prepare for any personal preparations.

Mrs. Amaral stated she is inclined to a remote start in January but would like to see more numbers.

Mr. Nunes asked Mr. Kiely if the schools will receive a “deep cleaning” during the holiday break.

Mr. Kiely stated that the schools are receiving vigorous cleaning every evening and that they will receive the cleaning that is typical over school vacation breaks adding that filters will be changed which is not normally done at this time.

Mr. Nunes asked if there will be any Union issues to moving to a remote model.

Dr. Gifford stated it is likely.

Mr. Oliver stated he will go along with the school schedule as it stands before the holiday break however he stated Committee members should be prepared to vote on whether or not to return in a full remote model in January at the next meeting scheduled for Monday, December 21, 2020.

Dr. Gifford recommended as much in school learning as possible as the changes and being out of school is taking a great toll on students' social, emotional and mental health.

Dr. Jenkins moved, seconded by Mr. Nunes to adjourn from Open Session at 7:15 p.m. On a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously: 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,



Bonny L. Gifford, Ed. D.
Superintendent